

Adopted 4/5/2004

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN
AIRPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AREA
COLUMBUS, INDIANA

Columbus Redevelopment Commission

Section I Geographic Area

This plan is prepared in accordance with IC 36-7-14-41 to promote economic development on the property commonly known as the Columbus Municipal Airport and shown on the map labeled “Attachment 1.” This area encompasses the Columbus Certified Technology Park and the surrounding property under the control of the Columbus Board of Aviation Commissioners.

Section II Goals & Objectives

The Columbus Redevelopment Commission has two overall goals:

- Enhance the economic health and vitality of Columbus
- Increase the city’s tax base

Central to the achievement of those overarching goals are the following objectives:

- Provide a variety of job opportunities for all skill levels
- Increase the number of high-paying jobs
- Increase the number of jobs for highly skilled, highly educated workers
- Continue to work toward economic diversification
- Grow amateur sports and sports tourism

Section III The Local Economy

Columbus has long been a successful manufacturing center in Indiana. In recent years, the average wage per job and the number of jobs has decreased, primarily due to the disproportionate loss of higher income jobs in the automotive industry. Employment in traditional manufacturing companies has declined dramatically since 1978. The national trend toward offshoring will exacerbate this problem, threatening a further decrease in high-paying, white collar jobs. Recent growth in the retail sector, particularly big-box retail, has created a higher demand for low-paying, low-skill jobs.

The city, through its economic development board, has actively recruited new manufacturing and technology jobs to the community. The growth in jobs and in new manufacturing investment has slowed since 1998. The city has experienced out-migration, decreases in median household income, and higher unemployment.

Appendix A contains the background data that support this plan. The Economic Development Board collected the data during recent review of past strategies.

Section IV Plan for Economic Growth

The city’s historic strategy for economic growth includes several key elements:

- Keep profitable existing business healthy

- Target recruiting efforts at new businesses that meet any of the following criteria:
 - ❖ Provide job opportunities for underrepresented occupations, skills and income levels
 - ❖ Provide workers opportunities for upward mobility
 - ❖ Export a product or service outside of community
 - ❖ Diversify the local economy beyond the automotive industry
- Attract high-growth, high-technology firms to Columbus
- Create a business climate that will attract jobs that pay more than the current average pay per worker
- Cultivate a supportive environment for entrepreneurship
- Support and enhance amateur sports and sports tourism

The Columbus Redevelopment Commission intends to capture tax increments from new and expanded development within the Airport Economic Development Area for the purpose of undertaking public improvement projects that will help ensure a healthy business climate for the companies that locate within the area and to grow existing sports tourism efforts.

Section V Findings

The Redevelopment Commission makes the following findings with regard to the Economic Development Plan.

1. **The plan promotes significant opportunities for gainful employment of Columbus Citizens.**

The city's current economic development strategy calls for an emphasis on high value-added jobs in the information technology (IT), life sciences, and advanced manufacturing areas. To help attract companies that will provide these kinds of jobs, Columbus has established a Certified Technology Park at Columbus Municipal Airport. It is expected that there will be a synergistic effect from this park, spurring development on airport property outside the technology park. Support businesses and convenience businesses for tech park employees will be encouraged.

The availability of the Certified Technology Park and other development sites at the airport will be attractive to new business enterprises. The airport location is particularly desirable, both because of the opportunity for housing and using company-owned and charter aircraft and the proximity to an educational complex that includes the Columbus campus of IUPUI.

2. **The plan for the Airport Economic Development Area cannot be achieved by regulatory process or by the ordinary operation of private enterprise without resort to the powers allowed the Redevelopment Commission because there is a lack of local public improvements in the area.**

The Columbus Municipal Airport lacks the infrastructure needed to implement the economic development strategy. The road network must be improved, and utility extensions are needed to provide adequate infrastructure for development. High-technology companies often require additional infrastructure, such as fiber-optic cabling, and a campus atmosphere conducive to attracting highly skilled employees. These and other improvements are needed to attract successful businesses to the area.

The airport location offers advantages to new companies that fit the profile described in the economic development plan, but airport improvements may be needed in order to attract these companies. Adequate runways, air traffic control capabilities, and hanger space are among the features that can be important.

Development in the Airport Economic Development Area has been hampered by the city's inability to fund the needed public improvements.

3. The public health and welfare will be benefited by the accomplishment of the plan for the Airport Economic Development Area.

Implementation of this plan will lead to job creation, particularly higher-wage jobs. These jobs will improve the standard of living in the community and thus will benefit the public health and welfare.

4. The accomplishment of the plan for the Airport Economic Development Area will be a public utility and benefit as measured by the attraction of permanent jobs, an increase in the property tax base, ~~and~~ improved diversity of the economic base increase in amateur sports tourism and activities, and development and growth of collegiate level athletics.

This plan is aimed specifically at adding new jobs and diversifying the Columbus economy beyond automotive. The new businesses that will be attracted to the Airport Economic Development Area will invest in new buildings which will increase the property tax base for the city.

This plan is also intended to improve the quality of life, attract athletes, spectators, residents and businesses through quality facilities and activities.

5. The plan for the Airport Economic Development Area conforms to other development plans for the unit.

The City of Columbus has an adopted Comprehensive Plan. In addition, the Board of Aviation Commissioners has a plan for the development of the airport property. This Airport Economic Development Plan is consistent with the Goals and Policies and Land Use elements of the Comprehensive Plan and with the specific plan for the airport

property. The Redevelopment Commission carefully reviewed and considered the city's Comprehensive Plan in developing this Economic Development Plan so that consistency would be assured.

6. **The Columbus Municipal Airport is an appropriate geographic area to be designated as an Economic Development Area.**

When the U.S. government transferred ownership of the former Bakalar Air Force Base to the Columbus Board of Aviation Commissioners decades ago, the city intended for a substantial portion of the property to be used as an industrial park. As the year s passed, the city continued to view this area as appropriate for industrial uses, particularly those that could benefit from the transportation advantages the site offers. The airport also has become the center for higher education in Columbus, with IUPUC and Ivy Tech located there, along with the innovative Columbus Learning Center that is now under construction. With the certification of the Technology Park, the airport has become an even more desirable location for the kinds of business growth the city seeks. The capture of tax increments from the new development will enable the city to provide the public improvements necessary to make the airport a thriving hub of economic activity to benefit the entire community.